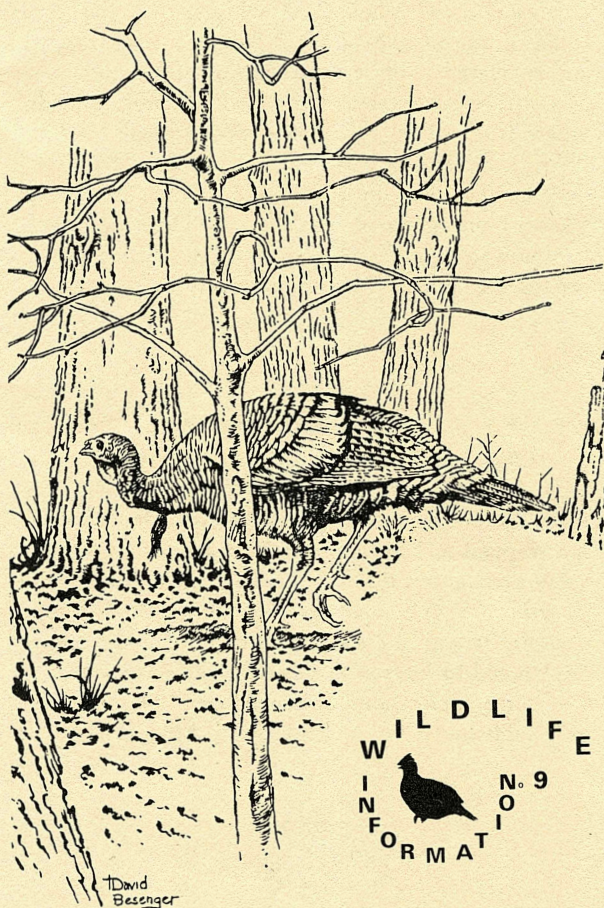


Wildlife Restoration

Bringing Them Back to Missouri



W I L D L I F E
I N F O R M A T I O N
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Missouri Department of Conservation

When the Department of Conservation was formed in 1937, wildlife was in trouble. The land had suffered from misuse and wildlife had been subjected to serious habitat loss and excessive hunting, largely by poachers. Immediately, the Department began wildlife restoration efforts.

White-tailed Deer

In 1937 only about 2,000 white-tailed deer remained. From 1937–1957, 2,343 deer were trapped and relocated to unoccupied habitats throughout Missouri. Most releases were made on private lands where landowners agreed to prevent illegal hunting. Public cooperation was the key to success. By 1944 deer numbers had increased to more than 15,000, and a short hunting season was allowed. Deer are now a common sight, and restoration of the whitetail is regarded as our first major success story.

Wild Turkey

Only a few thousand wild turkeys remained in 1937. Missouri's wild turkey population declined for many of the same reasons as deer. The Department has trapped turkeys for over 30 years and relocated them throughout the state. Today, the thrilling sight of wild turkeys is once again common. Other states now are trying to restore wild turkeys, and we have exchanged turkeys with them for ruffed grouse, river otters, pheasants, fish and prairie plant seed for re-establishment of these species to Missouri.

Beaver

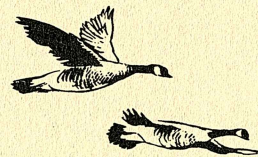
The beaver restoration project seemingly was blessed from the beginning. From almost being wiped out, beavers stocked since 1939 have recolonized all suitable habitats. A beaver trapping season is now open statewide.

Ruffed Grouse

If you lived in St. Louis in 1878 you could have bought a dozen ruffed grouse at the market for about \$3.00. Yet, a 1937 survey estimated only 100 birds remained in the state. Most important in the decline of grouse was the destruction of habitat . . . large areas had been cleared, and forests that remained were burned and heavily grazed. The Department began releasing ruffed grouse in 1959. Restocking accelerated in the late 1970s when Missouri turkeys were traded for grouse from other states. The goal of our program is to restore grouse to their original range where good habitat still exists. A limited grouse hunting season was initiated in 1983.

Giant Canada Geese

Resident giant Canada geese suffered severely from market hunting, stream channelization, wetland drainage, nest destruction and egg robbing. By the early 1900s, only a few survived along the lower Missouri River. In the course of 30 years the resident giant Canada goose population of Missouri has expanded to half the counties and has increased to well over 10,000 largely due to our restocking efforts.



River Otter

The river otter has been protected in Missouri since 1937. Yet, only a few have survived in southeastern Missouri. Since 1982 hundreds of otters have been released in suitable Missouri wetlands. Why restore river otters? Otters are native wildlife and having them back makes the Missouri outdoors a more interesting place for man to live. Someday soon, otter fur may again become a commodity that trappers can pursue during a short season.

Trumpeter Swan

Trumpeter swans are the largest of north American waterfowl. They once were fairly common migrants, and nested here as well; but they declined as Missouri was settled. By the early 1900s, the trumpeter swan population of the continental U.S. was less than 100 birds. The Department has had an experimental swan restoration project since 1982 in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The U.S. now has 10,000 trumpeter swans, but most of them are in Alaska. We hope our restoration program will allow swans to again become established in Missouri.

Bald Eagle

Missouri is home to our national symbol, the bald eagle. This species is rebounding from a decline due to overuse of chemicals that proved to be toxic to many wildlife species. Following restrictions on use of these chemicals, several wildlife species are making a comeback. In fact, a few eagle nests have been observed in recent years. We hope this nesting activity will continue to increase. In the meantime, biologists are rearing or "hacking" captive young birds for release to the wild.

Prairie Chicken

Millions of prairie chickens once inhabited Missouri. Today, less than 1 percent of our native tallgrass prairie remains, and the breeding range of the prairie chicken covers less than 700 square miles, mostly in southwestern Missouri. Loss of nesting and brood-rearing cover caused the decline. The Department has adopted an ambitious program designed to maintain and expand the present range of the prairie chicken and, eventually, to increase the population to a harvestable level. Hopefully, we will one day be able to add this species to our list of success stories that began with the white-tailed deer.

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Wildlife

Distrib. April 1991

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